

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Women struggle for beauty because society often sees beauty from physical appearance. Wolf (2002, p.1) states that women's ideal beauty is someone who has a tall, thin, white body, blonde hair, flawless face without pores, and symmetrical face. Beauty is a concept that is agreed upon throughout society (Goldman, 2014, p.2). Although beauty is not universal (Wolf, 2002, p.12), in some countries whiteness is still considered as the standard of beauty. People believe that having a white and smooth skin is one of major aspects that society defines as beautiful.

White skin, tall and slim body shape, beautiful long hair and pointed nose still considered as the beauty concept while most of Indonesian women are having medium skin tone, body shape and nose. Prabasmoro (2003, p.16) states that the issue above has appeared because "white" is related to cleanness that is assumed as a middle/higher class. She continues to assert that mixed-race face (Europe descendant) with pointed nose and tall body is more acceptable in Indonesia as an entity of discourse that involves all the importance of capitalism, consumerism and identity. The perception of the ideal beauty concept that most people believed have created "Beauty Myth". The beauty myth generates low self-esteem for women and high profits for industries (Wolf, 2002, p.49). Lury (1996, p.140) states that most of women are obsessed with beauty as the object of oppression in

male gaze while Chrisler et al., (2000, p.75) says that beauty is not only about male gaze but it is also an arena of competition for women. Therefore, to fulfill the obsession of being beautiful and improve their look, women encourage themselves to start using beauty product.

In a capitalist society, it is profitable to create beauty problem and then offer a product to solve that problem (Chrisler et al., 2000, p.74). If black, tanned, or wrinkled skin were desirable, or at least nonproblematic, women may no need to buy anti-aging serum or whitening cream for their skin to make their skin look younger or lighter. Capitalism plays a role in convincing women of the fact that the current body ideal is desirable and attainable. Women believe that beauty products can help their beauty problems, so they spend a lot of money for cosmetics or beauty products. As Wolf (2002, p.73) notes, women spend \$20 billion a year on products that uncertainly can solve their problems in terms of beauty. Winship (cited in Lury, 1996, p.134) asserts that consuming behavior constitute a creative skill to create a “look”, whether with clothes, furnishings, food or make-up – which are both pleasurable to do and to look at.

Mass media as the vehicles of popular culture has set and spread the beauty standards to the society (English et al., 1994, p. 51). Before 1990, beauty construction was presented mostly on mainstream media such as glossy magazine, TV show and advertisement. The influence of Western perceptions of beauty has spread across the glossy magazines (Arimbi, 2011: 225). In 1990s mass media has growth; the world is bombarded with cyberspace. The term “cyberspace” first appeared in the late 1960. During the 90s and the beginning of the 20th century,

the term ‘Cyberculture’ was at the core of social studies about Internet, most of them assuming that a new cultural model was emerging from Internet use that would change patterns of social relation, self identity and community (Ardevol, 2005, p. 2). Cyberspace facilitates people to create the alternatives media such as online magazine, blog, and social media. In the middle 1990s, people started to be introduced with online magazine (Quinn, n.d.). Online magazine helps people to get information without using paper like newspaper or common magazine because they can read it online. Later on, the term ‘weblog or blog’ was coined in 1997 by Jorn Barger. Blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries (Wu, 2009, p. 2). Most blogs are free to be accessed and also it has the ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format, while online magazine takes charge to the reader and doesn’t provide comments column.

In early 2000s until now, the studies about beauty concept commonly discussed use models on mainstream media such as magazines, television, and printed advertisements as the corpus while the using of alternative media such as blog, instagram, twitter are rarely analyzed. Clara Devi is one of the most inspiring lifestyle bloggers especially in fashion and beauty category. Her blog *Lucedale* was awarded as The Best Fashion Blog in 2011 by Indonesian Blogging Community (PESTA BLOGGER) and now have more than 11,700+ subscribers, hitting 6 million pageviews in June 2104 and growing more than 250,000 impressions monthly. She also got invited to some fashion weeks in overseas and once attended Sarah Sechan Show as a guest star. Due to the reason above, the

writer chooses Clara Devi's blog to be analyzed for she has been inspired many women in Indonesia.

Lucedale was started back in 2009 as a photography blog called '*the sunflares plethora*' by Claradevi Handriatmadja. It was a personal journal about Clara's passion for photography and vintage-related culture. Gradually, the blog was gaining readers from around the world and reaching up to 12,000 pageviews per day. Since 2011, the blog name was changed into *LUCEDALE*. The writer chooses blog because it is a place to share someone's thoughts or ideas in textual and visual form and they are very easy to be accessed by people.

The previous research was conducted using mainstream media as the corpus in reading beauty construction. Dwi Retno Linggasari (2015), conducted related research entitled *Reading Beauty Construction in Revlon Lipstick Printed Advertisements: a Social Semiotic Analysis*. The women beauty construction in four Revlon lipstick printed advertisements in four different magazine editions by using Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen Socio-Semiotic theory was revealed. The research showed Revlon believe that sensual and seductive lips are the standard of ideal American beauty. The models represent good look such as glamour, sweet, and carrier women, as the representation of multicultural American women.

Beside Dwi Retno Linggasari (2015) there is also the research entitled *Girls' Guide to Beauty: a Semiotic Approach in Analyzing the Concept of Beauty on Teenage girls' Magazine covers in Indonesia "kaWanku"* by Kelly M. Charenina (2009). She used semiotic theory by Roland Barthes to describe the

concept of beauty on Indonesian teenage girls in Kawanku magazine covers. The result showed that Indonesian girls still placed the western figure as the standard of beauty. Through the questionnaire, the writer found that Indonesian readers still considering cream coloured skin, and slim-tall body size as the ideal characteristics of a beautiful woman. They prefer wavy hair as the attractive hair as the ideals than long -straight- black one. Both previous researches used mainstream media as the corpus to reveal the beauty concept, while this research tries to see the beauty concept from blog as the new media.

In this research, the writer concerned with the beauty concept in *Lucedale*. The writer wants to reveal the beauty myth that represents the beauty concept in *Lucedale*'s posts. The writer scoop the attention about how the beauty myth represents the beauty concept in the *Lucedale*'s posts using the approach of social semiotic by Gunther Kress and Theo Van to analyze the beauty myth in the visual text and Systemic Functional Linguistic by Halliday in the written text. The writer chose social Semiotics because it is an attempt to describe and understand how people produce and communicate meaning in specific social settings in which sign making. It includes the actions of those who make signs in the environments of their cultural and social worlds (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p.266).

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study and the reason for choosing the topic, the study tries to answer this problem:

1. How is beauty myth represented on *Lucedale*?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal how beauty myth is shown and represented in Clara Devi's blog *Lucedale* based on the process of three metafunction applied by Kress and van Leeuwen. Social semiotic is operated to analyze the beauty myth on *Lucedale* posts in the visual text. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is also used to reveal how the beauty myth is shown in the written text of the blog.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study only focuses on *Lucedale*'s beauty category posts. The analysis investigates how beauty myth is represented in *Lucedale* by analyzing visual text using three metafunctions approach applied by Kress and van Leeuwen and written text by using three metafunctions of SFL by Halliday.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to reveal how far beauty myth has been influenced Indonesian women especially Clara Devi as one of the most influencing blogger in Indonesia. The writer also hope that it can give obvious input of knowledge on

how to analyze discourse, representation, and meaning of something based on and behind the pictures and texts on the blog as the alternative media to the writer and readers, especially to English Department students. Besides, it is hoped that it will also be valuable reference which provides information and knowledge related to beauty concept and beauty myth in Indonesian beauty and lifestyle blogger posts.